



"Sarah K. Weinberg" <weinbergsk@msn.com> on 03/31/2004 03:52:30 PM

To: politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov  
cc:

Subject: Re: Proposed changes to the definition of issue organizations

I have attached my letter in a MSword format.

Sarah K. Weinberg, MD  
weinbergsk@msn.com

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**Sarah K. Weinberg, MD**  
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March 31, 2004

Ms Mai T. Dinh  
Acting Assistant General Counsel  
Federal Election Commission  
Email: [politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov](mailto:politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov)

Dear Ms Dinh:

I am writing to comment on the proposal to change the definition of "political committee" to bring more politically active organizations under the provisions limiting campaign expenditures for Federal elections. I don't understand exactly what new rules are being proposed, so I will address my comments to the general issue of limiting public political discussion.

The 2004 election campaign is one of those few times in the history of our country in which the electorate is roughly evenly divided with a wide ideological split. Unusually strongly held opinions and beliefs related to how America should be governed, how our government should treat its citizens, and how our nation should relate to the rest of the world have already led to an explosion of published books on the best seller lists. If all election campaigns could be rated from hot to cold on the basis of the public's emotions, this one would be rated at the sizzling top.

Yet, many potential voters feel alienated and left out; they feel their votes don't count so why bother. Our nation has by far the lowest voter turnout of any democracy in the world - a fact of which the FEC should be ashamed, even if it's not exactly the Commission's fault. The FEC should not be doing ANYTHING that could even remotely be construed as limiting free discussion, not only of issues but of candidates' behavior and attitudes. Such actions would likely turn off potential voters even more.

Given the high emotional level of the 2004 campaign, many organizations that are very much organized around specific issues are going to find themselves with strong opinions about who should win in November. It is also completely to be expected that the feelings will be much stronger in those organizations that support policies that the Bush administration does not, as compared to organizations whose positions are supported by Bush. Any regulations by the FEC to restrict issue organizations' ability to express themselves politically will burden critics of the current administration much more than supporters, and will be interpreted as an imperial effort by the Bush administration to muzzle dissent to tilt the election toward Bush.

I shouldn't need to remind you that our nation was founded by dissenters. The Founding Fathers risked their lives with acts against England that were considered treasonous by the King in order to establish a representative democracy respectful of all points of view. It is vital to the continuation of the American experiment in democracy, once considered so inspiring by the rest of the world, that we not do anything, even well-meaning, that will have the effect of stifling dissent in the 2004 election.

Let me put it another way: I am a physician, and I hate it that the drug industry spends millions to set up fake organizations like Citizens for Better Medicare to hornswoggle legislators into passing laws to keep drug company profits high. I wouldn't be at all surprised if that and other drug company sponsored organizations spend megabucks in Bush's reelection campaign. But I am willing to put up with that misuse of "issue organization" just because to define them in such a way as to bring them under the campaign financing restrictions would also catch too many genuine organizations with genuine, strong views that need to be expressed in this election campaign.

AFTER the election would be the time to find a way to separate the genuine issue organizations, some of which have years of records of action in support of their issue, from the fake front organizations that are there solely to get around election spending limits. I couldn't agree more that way too much money is spent on elections, and that the coming election will be the worst in history, but it is too late now to reign in spending in a way that would be fair to both sides (I insist on ignoring Nader - political comment!).

Sincerely,

Sarah K. Weinberg, MD